

Proposed Model for Innovation of Community colleges to Meet Labor Market Needs in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The study introduced a very important issue for the development of labor market in any developing country. The rapid changes in technology and communication imposed challenges on education institutions for the development of labor market to meet local communities. These institutions have more responsibilities to provide professional and skilled workers for the private and public sectors. Although, serving community is an important objective in higher education, but in most of developing countries, the process of development is slow to meet local needs and challenges of globalization. Many developing countries invested in preparation of professionals, but the problem is the shortages of skilled workers which constitute the largest segment of labor market. Therefore, this study focused on community colleges as the key for the preparation of skilled workers at the bottom of labor market. Based on the success of these colleges in developed countries, like United States, Europe, and Japan. This study investigated community colleges in Saudi Arabia to examine their roles in meeting market needs. The study used two instruments; a survey of 25 community colleges was conducted through the WEB, and interview of 22 participants by asking them to use SWOT analysis. The study revealed that community colleges in Saudi Arabia face many obstacles in reaching the objective of preparing skilled workers for local community and labor market. These obstacles center on the quality of programs offered and the gap between community and lack of skills needed by employers. The study proposed a model for innovation and expanding community colleges to increase their role in labor market, which consisted of four parts interrelated; university, community colleges, labor market, and community. Community colleges were considered as the base of the model, where university provide services to community and labor market to get skilled workers. It is also suggested that the first two years of university will be considered community college for students who cannot get high achievement for the first two years in the university, also the study outlined many benefits for both universities and local communities and labor market in Saudi Arabia. This model may be applicable for other developing countries which face similar obstacles in the development of market needs.

Keywords: Community college, Developing countries, Labour market, Proposed model, Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has imposed demands on universities to break their isolation from community and society needs, especially with increased globalization which has contributed to more openness of all the universities in the world. Altbach (2004) indicated that modern technology, the internet, the increasing ease of communication and the flow of students and highly educated personnel across borders enhances globalization, where no academic system can exist by itself in the world of the 21st century. Therefore, many universities and government agencies established technical and community colleges to meet the needs of local markets and provide economic, cultural and social transformations and technical support for the community in order to provide better services to societies. Most community colleges in developing countries are owned by the government, few are owned by private sectors. Saudi universities were aware of the importance of community colleges not only to meet the needs of labor market, but also to solve problems of increasing demand on university enrollment. But the issue of existing gap between universities and labor market still exist, and this is not only for the case of Saudi Arabia, but also for the most of universities in the Arab World.

The Eighth Development Plan (2004-2009) and the successive five years plans in Saudi Arabia call for higher education to bridge the gap between labor market needs and the output of education institutions, for education plays an important role in development of the country. Major developed countries, such as United States, Japan, Germany and other countries prepare human manpower technically and professionally in various disciplines, where there has been a balance between needed professionals and skilled workers, where there is no balance in Saudi Arabia between skill workers and college graduates, especially in a country which depends mainly on

skilled expatriates from different countries.

Due to the shortage of skilled workers, Saudi Arabia established community according to American community college model which proved to be successful for serving local communities. The United States have rich experience in community colleges, where first college was established in 1901(Krebs, 1999), which was called middle-Joliet College in Illinois, it is the oldest college. American community colleges played an important role in the enrollment of millions of American citizens in higher education, where the open acceptance of all segments of society of young people and adults without restrictions or conditions. With this great success of American community colleges for the participation in local community development, the community colleges in Saudi Arabia have low link with community and low reputation and became a place for students who could not enroll in the university.

2. History of Community Colleges in Saudi Arabia

It is not intended in this study to have detailed history of community colleges in Saudi Arabia or in the Arab World, but to give some Ideas about the start of community colleges. The first community college was established in 1976, as two year junior teacher colleges, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, which prepare high school graduates to teach elementary schools and upgraded to four year colleges to provide better teacher for elementary schools. The first two year technical college was considered community colleges established in 1983 and was under the supervision of General Presidency of Technical Education and Training. AL Maree(2011) indicated that technical colleges face problems where graduates did not acquire skill needed in English and low practice in their programs., and these colleges cannot provide consultation for the local community. These community colleges developed to four year colleges due to the demands for higher qualification of graduates. Although, there is increase in numbers and quality of these colleges but their participation in labor market was limited. The major development of community colleges came as part of fulfillment of government plans to expand community colleges to meet the need of labor market which mainly depends on non-Saudi citizens. Some colleges established more than one community college, and the number reached 50 community colleges. Since education is separate for boys and girls in Saudi Arabia, there is a separate community colleges for girls which also similar for community colleges for boys. The organization of most of the community colleges are similar in most Arab countries, the difference exists in major fields of study (Turki,1984).Bobtana and Moawad(1985) stated the objectives of establishing Community colleges in the Arab World as follows:

- 1- to meet great demands of societies on higher education in all Arab countries.
- 2- to provide equal opportunities for access to higher education .
- 3- to meet the need for development and diversification of higher education.
- 4- to introduce new tasks for higher education to serve the community.

There is no difference between these objectives and the objectives for establishing community colleges in Saudi Arabia, but the number of community colleges in a large geographic area such Saudi Arabia (with 50 community colleges) is below the number needed for the development of labor market with comparison of a small country as Jordan, which have more than 52 community colleges, and these community colleges started before Saudi Arabia. This background has implication that community colleges should be innovated and expanded to meet needs of local communities in a large geographic area such as Saudi Arabia.

3. The Problem of the Study

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia spent billions of dollars on public and higher education each year, but the outcomes are not meeting the ultimate goals of government plans. The market depends largely on non-Saudis, not only for professional jobs, but also for skilled workers, at the time college graduates in Saudi Arabia face problems getting employed in labor market. This amazing problem is due to low preparation and shortages of skilled manpower, and lack of coordination between universities and local communities. Therefore, the study will investigate community colleges to identify obstacles encountered in their system to propose a model for expanding their roles to be more effective and efficient to meet labor market needs in Saudi Arabia.

4. Objectives of the study

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify main obstacles encountered in community colleges to expand their roles in local labor

market .

2. To ease the burdens on universities to focus on quality of teaching and research .
3. To propose a model to contribute to the expansion of the community colleges role in order to achieve community participation and meet the labour market needs.

5. Community Colleges and Labor market

Since the establishment of community colleges in Saudi Arabia and many Arab countries, they faced several problems in the internal programs and external link with community, which related to low participation of these colleges to labor market.(Alsolaimi,1996,Fify,2013),in addition there is weak preparation in English language which is needed for globalized market ,and there is a weak link between programs in community colleges and their application in the field. Alturki(1984) indicated that the graduates of community colleges in Jordan suggested that some courses taught are not necessary.

Morsee (1993), Marwan and Karajan (2010) stated that college programs did not match with local community needs , and the student usually enroll in these colleges not because of their choice ,but because of their low grade average which cannot qualify them for enrollment in the university, and parent usually prefer university for their children than community colleges, so the students enroll in community colleges without great interest. Employers suggested that in order for technical colleges to be improved : to make specific objective for these colleges, to integrate theories with application ,and to involve employers with higher qualifications in decision making to represent labor market needs(Almaliki, 1996). Alsolami(1996) also ,indicated in his study that technical colleges face internal and external problems which limit their success in labor market.

These problems not only exist for male community colleges but also in female community colleges. Bobshate(2007),also indicated that the method of teaching in these colleges depends largely on traditional teaching ,and there is no programs to upgrade lower achievement of students ,there is low skills for meeting labor market needs. and student face problems to get jobs after graduation, and increased admission in humanity majors in these colleges contributed for more isolation of these colleges from labor market needs, which depend largely on skilled workers in technical fields. Although technical colleges provide labor market with many technicians ,but they lack the skills needed by industry, and it was recommended that these colleges should study the needs of labor market and industry and to be integrated into college programs. Shaddadi (2002) also, indicated that technical colleges face problems for teaching theories with less application and weakness of internal effectiveness which cause the gap between college output and labor market .The research shows that community colleges and technical colleges face obstacles for meeting the needs of labor market, these obstacles in programs and links with community put more demands for innovation of these colleges to upgrade their programs to cope with rapid changes in society and global market.

5.Comparison between Saudi and American community colleges

For a comparison, Saudi community colleges were compared with well-established community colleges in the United State of America, in order to make use of other international community colleges, not only for Saudi Arabia , but also may benefit other community colleges in other developing countries.

Table 1. Comparison between Saudi and American Community Colleges

US community colleges	Saudi community colleges
Community colleges programs range from two to three years	Community colleges programs range from two to three years
There are two tracks , one professional education to lead to labor market And the other lead to the university	There are two tracks as in U.S colleges
the college offers diploma certificate for the track of the labor market, and the other track to be accepted to the university.	the college offers diploma certificate for the track of the labor market, and the other track to be accepted to the university
Admission can be without a high school diploma after passing the acceptance test	Admission requires a high school degree of certain average
Multiple and diverse programs to meet the needs of the labor market	Majors and Programs are limited for meeting labor market needs
Tuition is lower than two-thirds of University	The enrollment is free
Most community colleges are private (about one-third of them are government colleges)	Most of community colleges are owned and supervised by the government.
Courses offered : automotive engineering, interior design, technology, Aviation, biotechnology, aircraft maintenance growth of children ,the criminal justice, health care services food management , technology Fire Science ,graduated about 80% of the men of the police and fire services and technical emergency , and more than half of the nurses , and about more than half of the teachers were enrolled .	Courses offered: computer and information technology, management, network technology database management development of database applications, Web development technology, marketing ,insurance. sales management pharmacist assistant program,, tourism , office management ,system analysis.
Strong academic advising	Weak academic advising.
The student may lose some units when transferred to college out of state , for each college has different requirement according to local needs.	The student may not lose units of study when transferred in the same specialization for community colleges have the same system.
Students enroll in community colleges for low cost of tuition .Also , students stay with their families.	Students enroll in community colleges because they cannot be enrolled at the university ,
Study at community colleges are more flexible than university.	Study at community colleges are more flexible than university.
The college offer programs and noncredit courses	The college offer training programs
Programs offered to meet the needs of local community .	Programs are offered meet some needs of community

Source: Collections pf previous studies and websites for community colleges

Table 1, shows that there are similarities and differences between Saudi and American community colleges , but the main difference is that American colleges reflect the needs of local community while Saudi community colleges are based on national level to meet the needs of national plans , therefore , local needs are not embedded in the system of these colleges Also the centralized system of education contribute to meeting goals at national level rather local levels. The courses and programs of American community colleges differ from one community college to the other to reflect local needs ,while in the case of Saudi Arabia , the course and programs are similar in different local communities ,but small differences may depend on the location of these colleges in small or big cities. Soo, (2010) indicated that American colleges and universities characterized with various types and visions and goals based on the needs of the surrounding environment.The importance of American community colleges can be noticed from the enrollment of 42% of secondary school graduates (Horn,2002) compared to only 8% student enrolled in community colleges in Saudi Arabia (Summary of Student Enrollment,2014) , the enrollment in Saudi community colleges from high schools are very low compared to enrollment in university, and most students enrolled in community colleges, because they could not meet the requirement of the universities.

6 Method of the study

The author used two methods to analyzed the data; First method was a survey of 25 website from 50 community colleges as sample selected by using google search, The website of each college have rich information about each college programs and managements. Data of all 25 colleges were collected ,and refined to eliminate any duplication of data ,and the result of the analysis outlined in table (1) . The second method was the interview

with 22 directors of educational planning attending training program at the college of Education at King Saud University in the second semester of 2015. They were asked to use SWOT analysis to determine the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats facing these colleges as stated in tables (2,3). These two analytical processes were very useful more than questionnaire. for the analysis of actual data and using the SWOT analysis.

7. Analysis of Data

1. A survey of 25 community colleges was conducted to identified similarity and deference's of programs offered by these colleges revealed the followings:
 - Community colleges are part of the universities, so they are not independent in decision making with regard to education programs and community needs.
 - Some colleges has one program and other colleges have many programs , and this depends on how big is the university and how big is the city where it is located.
 - There are some community colleges partnerships with global colleges.
 - Some universities has more than one community college depend how old of the university.
 - There are general requirement for community colleges of 9 hrs. university each college apply university system like any other colleges in the university with minor difference.
 - Community colleges have similar programs, mainly: computer technology , business administration, English language, and other additional fields depends on how big is the university like technology of communication, food and other programs, hotel management, electricity, and computer technology. Offering these programs depend on the location of these colleges.

The survey indicated that community colleges are not independent to make their own decisions easily to meet local market needs, for the college to change program or suggest a new one it takes long processing to university, with this tight relationship between community college and university, the existing Community colleges cannot meet the needs of labor market.

2. Interview with 22 participants asked to use SWOT analysis to identify the weakness ,strength, the threats, and the opportunities of these community and technical colleges. After the analysis of the respondents and discussion revealed the final SWOT analysis outlined in tables (2,3).

Table 2.results of SWOT analysis for the internal factors of the community colleges

The strengths of community colleges	Weaknesses of Community Colleges
To free universities to focus on qualitative aspects of their programs	Community colleges accept students with low average who cannot get admission to the main universities
To help public universities to attract students with higher grades , while students with low grades enroll in community colleges,	Most of community colleges have similar programs regardless of the differences of local community needs
Participation of Community colleges to some extent in labor market	Many students Complained about the lack of applied courses in college programs
Provide an access to students with low grades to higher education.	There is no incentives for students to enroll in community colleges compared with university students who are paid by the government monthly allowance of 300 US dollars.
Community colleges (as part of the universities) have access to use laboratories of the universities for various disciplines	Lack of training and professional development of faculty members at these colleges
Faculty of community colleges can be developed easily through the universities	Programs were not designed to meet the needs of communities

Table2, shows that the community colleges face weakness in their internal programs for the lack of application of theory into practice, the similarity of their programs which did not incorporate local needs of surrounding communities, and these programs lack of practical application of what is learned. The enrollment of most of students in these colleges is not by their choice or interest , but because they could not be admitted by the university, so they enroll in these community colleges .Community colleges have some strength for they free universities to focus on qualitative aspects of their programs.

Table 3.SWOT Analysis of External Factors for Community Colleges

Opportunity for community colleges	Challenges facing community colleges
Community colleges have great support from university leaders.	Rapid changes in scientific and technical progress in the world.
The development plans in Saudi Arabia support expansion in community colleges to meet labor market needs .	Centralized system of education, procedures and legislation limit the progress of the development of these colleges.
Local development is needed in Saudi Arabia	Low reputation of community colleges.
There is a demand for skilled labor below college level.	Employers are not keened to employ community colleges graduates ,despite the needs of skilled labor.
All jobs occupied by non-Saudis are available for community college graduates. If they have the skills required by labor market.	Labor market needs new and diverse skills .

Table3,shows that community colleges also face external challenges for the rapid development of technology and market demand for new skills. Kasper (2003).indicted that today, technology is a factor affecting most of the demographic, economic, and academic challenges that community colleges face, and innovations in the workplace have forced employees to upgrade their skills or seek advanced training.

But with all weakness and challenges facing community colleges, there is great opportunities to achieve the desired development of community colleges for there is a great support from government and university leaders that can be used to achieve more effective and efficient roles of community colleges to make Saudi market more comparative.

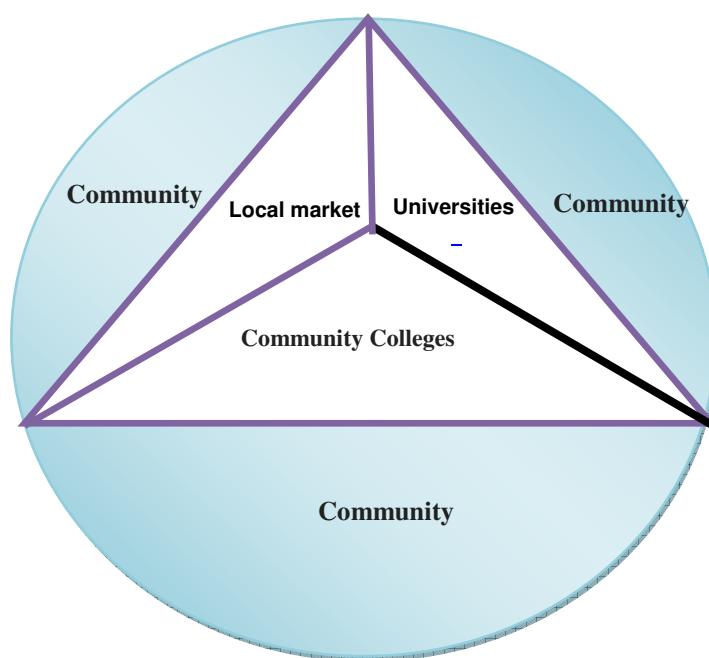


Figure 1; Proposed Model of Community Colleges
 Source : Designed by the author

The proposed model for the innovation of community colleges considers these colleges at the base of both universities and labor market. The universities depend on these colleges to achieve their goals to serve communities, and labor market get skilled workers from these colleges, the model consist of four components inter related to serve community as shown in figure 1.

- 1-Universities
- 2- Community colleges
- 3- labor market
- 4- Community

7. Requirements for the implementation of the model

The objective of the model is to provide a framework through which to innovate and expand the scope of current community colleges in quantity and quality to provide better service for the community and labor market. The model was designed and based on the result of the survey, SWOT analysis and research, to strengthen the links between the four components of the model and to overcome organizational and academic problems facing community colleges. Implementation of the model needs basic requirements stated as follows:

7.1 general requirement

1. To make public well informed about community colleges and their importance in the development of the country, through all various media and social networks.
2. To make an open access admission for community colleges for any student with high school certificate without other conditions .
3. To develop the technology infrastructure of community colleges.
4. To make community participate in department and college meetings for better coordination with local community needs.
5. Universities should investigate local needs to put disciplines and programs to improve programs of community colleges.

7.2 requirement for Existing Community Colleges

In order to increase enrollment in these colleges, and make students feel equal , it is suggested that all students have the chance to continue to four year college at the university if they satisfy these requirements :

1. if a student earned cumulative average of at least 4.00 out of 5.00, student has the right to continue university program ,if he passed the qualification examination .but if he cannot get this average or he did not pass the qualification examination , he / she will apply for job in labor market or in the government jobs.
2. If a student gets two years of working experience, he can apply to the university for enrollment , and will be given the chance to complete four year college, if his cumulative average not less than 3.50, and satisfy requirement of the department .

7.3 requirement for enrollment in the university

It is recommended that requirements for admission for universities will be decreased , so any student with at least of 3.50 average can be enrolled in the university in general program without specification of any major.

1. when the students get higher than 3.50 average out of 5 for the first full two years at the university , students can be admitted to complete the four year college in the major required by students .
2. when students get 3.50 cumulative average or below , they will be provided with community college certificate to apply for a job in labor market.
3. Students can be accepted to finish four year program after two years of experience, if they have at least 3.50 cumulative average.

The model expand community colleges graduates without major financial costs , graduates from community and technical colleges, and from the first two years of the universities who did not satisfy 3.50 cumulative average. and at the same time free university to be more involved in research and professional consultations.

8,Success Factors for the Implementation of the model

It was taken into consideration to implement the model with low financial resources, and can be implemented successfully at any time if these requirements are fulfilled:

1. To get great support from the Ministry of Education and university leaders to expand community colleges to achieve more involvement in meeting demand of labor market.
2. To meet the challenges of globalization and rapid developments of communication and technology by acquiring training the staff of community colleges.
3. To develop flexible regulations for community colleges for an open enrollment of all students who have high school certificates without requirement of specific grade average .
4. To make equal opportunities between student at community colleges and student at universities concerning any financial and other benefits , since all students under the umbrella of the universities.

5. To make an open enrollment for fulltime and part time enrollment so employed student can have access to higher education.
6. To establish office for coordination between community colleges and local community to narrow the gap between these colleges and the need of these communities .
7. To activate the roles of deans of community colleges to provide more services for the communities

9.The benefits of Implementation of the Proposed Model

Although existing community colleges played to some extent important roles in Saudi labor market, but these colleges face problems in achieving the goals of government plans for development. These colleges were not considered by parents and students as their ultimate goal, In order to activate community colleges to meet local labor market and increase enrollment. The implementation of the model will have the following benefits:

1. The community colleges are located at the base of the model to meet large community needs.
2. The model will limit drop out and failure of students at the universities, for students who are unable to get required average at the end of two years ,they will be provided with community college certificate, and they will be effective citizens in community.
3. Implementing the model will free universities to focus on qualitative aspects of their programs, rather than involvement in problems with students of low achievement.
4. Reduction of repetition and dropout in universities will save large financial costs for the development of university programs
5. The model provide more access for students to higher education where students enroll in universities and community colleges and technical colleges with more flexible admission procedures.
6. There will be competition from the students to get high scores to enter the undergraduate majors, which help universities to be competitive global institutions.
7. The application of the proposed model will help to increase community college graduates which result in more development in the society.
1. The application of the proposed model will create job opportunities in the local levels, and reduce migration of graduates to other communities.

10.Conclusion

The main goal of community colleges is to serve the community and meet the labor market needs. Community colleges in developed countries succeeded in reaching such goal, but some developing countries face problems in meeting labor market needs. due to low quality of programs, lack of skills needed by labor market. In order for these colleges to play important roles in local communities, the author proposed a model for innovation and expanding roles of these colleges not only for Saudi Arabia, but also for other countries that may benefit from such model. The study revealed that in order for community colleges to be active in the development , they should be free from any management constraints that usually imposed on these colleges either by universities or by any central agencies .

The objective of the proposed model is to provide a framework to innovate and expand community roles. The study outlined general requirement for the implementation of the model , these requirement may be applicable to any developing country after fitting these requirements for their needs.. It is recommend that the proposed model may develop new admission policies for these colleges and make community and technical colleges programs more practical and applicable to labor market needs.

11. Recommendations:

1. The proposed model may help to develop a strategy for community and technical colleges and higher education to activate community college and expand their roles to serve local communities.
2. To develop flexible admission policies in higher education to increase involvement of higher education in local community.
3. Transfer technical colleges to Ministry of Education to be community colleges with technical programs to increase their roles in industry and labor market. .

4. To give community colleges more autonomy from the rest of the colleges at the university in order to be able to move freely to meet the changing needs of the society.
5. To allow access for community graduates to continue university degree If they meet the requirement of admission outlines in the proposed model.

12.Implication of the study

It is hoped that this model helps Saudi universities in the development and expansion of community participation significantly to achieve the contribution of higher education in the local and national development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The model for innovation of community colleges may be applicable to developing countries , but the implementation steps may be differ from one country to the other according to their needs , resources available, and interest in developing local communities .

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